

Message Text

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22

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 914

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IS, US

SUBJECT: ISRAELI PRESS ON TENSIONS IN US/ISRAELI RELATIONS

SUMMARY. ISRAELI PRESS APRIL 5 FOCUSES ON THE US/ISRAELI CONTROVERSY OVER \$550 MILLION TRANSITIONAL FUNDING, PRESIDENT FORD'S OPPOSITION, AND THE ALLEGED LINK WITH THE ISRAELI STAND ON US ARMS SALES TO EGYPT. SEVERAL COMMENTATORS ARE CRITICAL OF RABIN'S HANDLING OF US/ISRAELI RELATIONS WHICH HE HAS PRESENTED TO ISRAEL PUBLIC AS MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY. END SUMMARY.

1. DAVAR (BLOCH) REPORTS CONCERN IN JERUSALEM OVER DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE US ADMINISTRATION. BLOCH WRITES THAT "SEVERAL MINISTERS THINK THAT AN EXHAUSTIVE DISCUSSION ON ISRAEL-US RELATIONS OUGHT TO BE HELD SOON. IN THE MEANTIME, JERUSALEM REFRAINS FROM BLAMING PRESIDENT FORD FOR BLOCKING THE AID FOR THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD, AND HIS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE AID IS ATTRIBUTED TO HIS OVERALL STRUGGLE FOR BUDGET CUTS. EFFORTS ARE NOW DIRECTED AT THE FINAL DECISION (ON AID) WHICH WILL BE MADE IN THE COURSE

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OF THE WEEK, BUT THE VIEW IN JERUSALEM IS THAT THE CHANCES

TO RECEIVE THE FULL \$550 M. ARE REMOTE..."

2. HAARETZ (BENZIMAN) REPORTS "DIFFERENCES IN EVALUATIONS BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER OVER THE CHANGE IN THE ADMINISTRATION POSITION REGARDING ISRAEL'S REQUEST FOR...ADDITIONAL AID FOR THE INTERIM PERIOD... WHILE RABIN IS INCLINED TO REGARD THE CHANGE IN THE ADMINISTRATION POSITION AS AN EXPRESSION OF INTERNAL US DEVELOPMENTS CONNECTED WITH THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE FOREIGN MINISTER EMPHASIZED THAT WASHINGTON'S STAND REPRESENTS ITS POSITION TOWARDS ISRAEL AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME. THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD THE CABINET THAT WHILE AT AN EARLIER STAGE THE PRESIDENT HAS SHOWN A PASSIVE POSITION TOWARDS ISRAEL'S REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL AID, HE HAS NOW SWITCHED TO A POSITION OF ACTIVE OPPOSITION, WHILE THE SECRETARY OF STATE CLAIMS THAT EVEN NOW HE SUPPORTS GRANTING FINANCIAL AID TO ISRAEL..."

3. PRESS ALSO QUOTES GOVERNMENT SOURCES IN JERUSALEM AS EXPRESSING ANGER AT "OUT OF CONTEXT QUOTE OF A STATEMENT MADE BY PREMIER RABIN WHICH HAD BEEN CIRCULATED OFFICIALLY BY THE US ADMINISTRATION. IN THE QUOTE, RABIN SAID THAT EGYPT HAD CUT BACK ITS ARMED FORCES BY ONE THIRD - OR 300,000 MEN...ACCORDING TO THE SOURCES, THE QUOTE WAS DISTORTED AND TENDENTIOUSLY USED. RABIN NOTED THE RECENT RELEASE OF SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF FRONTLINE EGYPTIAN SOLDIERS - BUT HAD IN NO WAY IMPLIED THAT EGYPT'S MILITARY MIGHT WAS A RECEDING THREAT TO ISRAEL...", THE POST WRITES.

4. HAARETZ EDITORIAL DESCRIBES RABIN'S POSITION ON THE BUDGET AND THE SALE OF US ARMS TO EGYPT AS "A DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL FAILURE." "NOBODY IS CLAIMING THAT RABIN HAS NOT EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO THE SALE OF PLANES TO EGYPT OR THAT HE DID NOT DISCUSS WITH PRESIDENT FORD THE NEED FOR FINANCIAL AID...THE IMPRESSION CREATED IN WASHINGTON... IS THAT PRESIDENT FORD HAD GROUNDS TO BE SURPRISED AT THE STRENGTH OF THE OPPOSITION BY THE AMERICAN JEWS TO THE SALE OF PLANES AND ALSO AT THEIR STUBBORNESS ON THE AID ISSUE, SINCE HE COULD NOT HAVE CONCLUDED FROM THE UNCLASSIFIED

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PREMIER'S TONE ON THESE TWO ISSUES THAT GRAVE DIFFICULTIES LAY AHEAD FOR HIM...WE CAN ONLY NOTE THE FACT THAT AGAIN MISUNDERSTANDINGS HAVE TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT; AND SINCE THE PRIME MINISTER... INSISTS THAT THE FORMULATION OF OUR RELATIONS WITH THE US IS TO BE CONCENTRATED IN HIS HANDS, HE CANNOT BE ABSOLVED ALTOGETHER FROM ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REPEATED TENSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO CAPITALS..."

5. MAARIV EDITORIAL ALSO CRITICIZES RABIN WHO "DOES NOT MISS AN OPPORTUNITY TO POINT OUT WHAT HE REGARDS AS A CONSIDERABLE ACHIEVEMENT OF HIS POLICY...MR. RABIN SHOULD NOT BE ANGRY WITH PRESIDENT FORD NOR WITH THE NEWSPAPERS FOR NOTING THE FACT THAT THE US ADMINISTRATION IS USING STATEMENTS MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO JUSTIFY THE SUPPLY OF ARMS TO EGYPT. RABIN WILL DO WELL TO SELECT HIS WORDS MORE CAREFULLY AND NOT SUPPLY WASHINGTON WITH THE QUOTES IT NEEDS..."

6. HAARETZ COMMENTATOR YOEL MARCUS, NOTING "THE CONFRONTATION" BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ADMINISTRATION, CITES EXAMPLES OF WHAT HE CALLS "ISRAELI OVERREACTION" TO ACTIONS TAKEN BY WASHINGTON (OPPOSITION TO THE SALE OF 6 PLANES TO EGYPT AND THE LETTER BY THE 76 SENATORS ARE TWO EXAMPLES). MARCUS NOTES THAT "IT IS POSSIBLE THAT WE OUGHT TO HAVE PAID MORE ATTENTION TO THE ARGUMENTS OF FORD AND KISSINGER THAT WE BOTHER THEM 'WITH EVERY LITTLE NONSENSE.' IT IS ENOUGH TO SEE HOW..EXPRESSIONS VOICED BY AMBASSADOR TOON IN ISRAEL ABOUT OUR INTERNAL AFFAIRS..MADE US JUMP AND COMPLAIN ABOUT HIS 'HIS INTERVENTION', IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND HOW OFFICIAL OR UNOFFICIAL AMERICANS REACT TO OUR EXAGGERATED INVOLVEMENT..." MARCUS CONCLUDES WITH THE ADVICE THAT ISRAEL SHOULD CALCULATE ITS STEPS MUCH MORE PRUDENTLY.

7. PRESS ALSO GIVES EXTENSIVE COVERAGE TO SECRETARY KISSINGER'S ADDRESS BEFORE THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS AND HIGHLIGHTS HIS REMARK THAT THE US "WILL NEVER ABANDON ISRAEL." SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS CARRY EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW GIVEN BY AMBASSADOR TOON TO A LABOR PARTY MAGAZINE, HIGHLIGHTING HIS REMARKS THAT "ANTI ISRAELI

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FEELINGS MAY DEVELOP AMONG THE AMERICAN PUBLIC IF THE AMERICANS FEEL THAT GOI IS A LITTLE STUBBORN WITH REGARD TO AMERICAN NEEDS IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD..." AMBASSADOR TOON IS ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT THE US "WILL DO NOTHING TO HARM ISRAEL'S SECURITY - SINCE THE PRESERVATION OF YOUR SECURITY AND INDEPENDENCE IS PART OF OUR NATIONAL INTEREST..."

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